

Sarasota, Florida -- Congressman Vern Buchanan, who just returned from an eight-day tour of Iraq and Afghanistan, said today he was impressed by the morale and professionalism of our soldiers fighting the war on terror. The 13th District Republican shared his thoughts and impressions regarding his congressional delegation trip to the Middle East.

"Morale is high," said Buchanan. "The troops and their commanders are committed to winning the war. I am especially proud of the soldiers I met with from Florida. They are courageous, trained professionals and focused on their mission. They have my unqualified support."

Buchanan met with soldiers and commanders and toured operations in Kuwait City, Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi, Bahrain, and Afghanistan. He said Iraq remains a very dangerous place.

"The troops and commanders are committed to making it work. But there is no question that the Iraqis themselves need to come together and take responsibility for the security of their own nation."

"The War in Iraq is an important part of the global War on Terror. Failure in Iraq would go beyond being a disaster for American foreign policy. Failure would destabilize the country, destabilize the Middle East, and make America less safe. The American people are well-aware of Al Qaeda plans to turn Iraq into a staging area to spread its global terrorism.

The Congressman met with Gen. David Patreaus, the commander of U.S. troops in Iraq, and said he was very impressed.

"He is the right man for the job," said Buchanan. "He is a thoughtful leader who brings a new and different perspective to the mission. We have to give him time to achieve our goals. This is our last – best – chance to bring stability to the region and allow a lawful government to take hold."

Buchanan added, "The question to me is not whether the U.S. will succeed; it is whether the Iraqi government and the various factions can put aside their differences and take control of their own country."

Buchanan was one of five freshmen lawmakers to spend eight days visiting Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bahrain to thank the troops and assess the War on Terror.